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Professor Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford University
School Of Medicine
300 Pasteur Drive
Palo Alto, Calif.
U. S. A.

Dear Professor Lederberg:

As to your first question, it is generally assumed by vital statisticians in Japan that the striking excess of birth registrations in January is due to a real seasonal variation plus an artificial bias in mis-registration, although the magnitude introduced by this bias is not known. There seems to have been a tendency, especially in rural areas, to register births at the end of December as if the child were born in January of the next year. This was due to the superstition that the birth on new year will bring good fortune to the child. However, such a trend appears to have decreased in recent years. In this connection, there is some evidence that some female births that took place in December 1950 were registered as of January 1951, this again being due to some astrological predictions.

As to your second question, we have recently collected a fairly large body of family data on ABO blood groups and secretor status in a population living in northern Honshu. Our main interest is to test for possible prezygotic and zygotic selection operating on these polymorphisms. The analysis is now in progress: so far as pooled data are concerned, no effect of ABO incompatibility could be found in this population. The data are suitable for looking for the seasonal incidence of the progenies of incompatible matings as compared to compatible combinations; this is one of the points of our present analysis program and we should be delighted to cooperate with you. However, it will take at least one year more until we could get some final conclusions to compare with your data. Anyhow, our present data would provide some results of retrospective nature, so that, if they proved to be positive, a new project of prospective study on the newborns would be considered as the next step.

The Hokkaido data we collected some years ago are not suitable for our purpose because they provide no information on the blood groups of the progenies. Since the population of the Ainu is very small in size and they are rather isolated, the possibility of stratification due to introgression from the Ainu seems to be negligible.

Sincerely yours

E. Matsunaga

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